

William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

21st February 2013

Dear William Powell AM,

RE: NICE Quality Standard for Service User Experience in Adult Mental Health

Thank you for your letter dated 23 January 2012. After discussions within and between our organisations, we felt that it would be sensible to send a joint response from both Gofal and Mind Cymru.

Firstly, we support the petitioners' aims of urging the Welsh Government to adopt the *NICE quality standard for service user experience in adult mental health*. However, we are strongly of the view that these quality statements should be regarded as a minimum standard and that the NHS in Wales should always aspire to go above and beyond the values, principles and actions outlined in the statements.

Having examined the correspondence that accompanied your letter, there appears to be some uncertainty about whether the Welsh Government is going to adopt the current quality standard and when they will do so. As a result, we contacted Dr Sarah Watkins (Head of Mental Health and Vulnerable Groups Division within Welsh Government) and asked for clarification on this particular issue. We received the following response, which should reassure the petitioners and alleviate some of their concerns:

"I am pleased to confirm the plan is and always has been, that we are going to adopt the quality standards including those for service user experience..."

"It is anticipated that the new Service Level Agreement with NICE will be formally signed in April, which will coincide with NICE being re-established as an Arms Length Non Departmental Public Body. We expect the NHS in Wales to take full account of all clinical guidance published by NICE when commissioning and delivering services, as it is based on the best available evidence. Doing Well, Doing Better – Standards for Health Services in Wales also requires organisations to take account of NICE's clinical guidance."

We recognise and support the Welsh Government's claims that that parts of the *Mental Health (Wales) Measure* go above and beyond the NICE Quality Standard and that elements of *Together for Mental Health* reflect many of the values outlined in the Standard. However, it is important that implementation of the *Mental Health (Wales) Measure*, delivery of *Together for Mental Health* and compliance with the *NICE Quality Standard for Service User Experience* are all monitored and that local health boards, local authorities and the Welsh Government are held to account.

It may be helpful for Petitions Committee members to be aware of the following mechanisms that are being developed to support this:

- **Research to assess and review implementation of the Measure.** A research contract to fulfil the legal duty to review the *Mental Health (Wales) Measure* is currently out for tender. The primary aim of the contract is to provide evidence on the views of service users, carers and practitioners with regards to the implementation of the Measure.
- **Service user and carer involvement in *Together for Mental Health* National Partnership Board and Local Partnership Boards.** Service users and carers will be represented on both the local and national partnership boards. There are four places on the National Partnership Board for service users and carers. A mechanism to support this representation is currently being developed.
- **Minimum data set.** The Welsh Government is currently developing a minimum data set in order to record and monitor the performance of mental health services in a consistent way across Wales and to support the delivery of *Together for Mental Health*.

In addition to the points made above, we agree with and support the petitioners' concerns that Part 2 of the *Mental Health (Wales) Measure* only requires care coordinators to address a minimum of one of the eight 'life areas' in care and treatment plans. We, along with other organisations, continue to advocate that all eight areas of life should be considered within care and treatment plans, and that any review of the Measure should take account of this.

Finally, we would also wish to see Welsh involvement and influence in future development of NICE Quality Standards. Devolution means that divergence in policy and legislation is an important consideration, evidenced in this case with the introduction and implementation of the *Mental Health (Wales) Measure* and *Together for Mental Health*. Although two of the three existing [NICE Quality Standards Advisory Committees](#) appear to have one or two members from Wales, the absence

of a member from Wales on the remaining committee indicates that there is no formal guarantee of Welsh representation. As the Welsh Government is planning to adopt current and future quality standards, we would certainly support any move to secure Welsh representation on each of these committees.

We hope that our response has been useful. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if we can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Ewan Hilton
(Executive Director, Gofal)

Lindsay Foyster
(Director, Mind Cymru)

Katie Dalton
(Public Affairs Manager, Gofal)

Ruth Coombs
(Manager for Influence and Change, Mind Cymru)

cc. Naomi Stocks (Petitions Committee Clerk)